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DAWN ON THE DISTANT HILLS



BY STELLA GRENFELL FLORENCE



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DAWN ON THE DISTANT HILLS





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BY

STELLA GRENFELL FLORENCE

1920

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## THE NEWER EDEN

“God is thy law, thou mine; to know no more  
Is woman’s happiest knowledge.”

— PARADISE LOST

So spake the primal woman; while the dews  
Of Eden trembled on the new-sprung grass  
Beneath her feet, and every leaf and bud  
Be-pearled with Nature’s happy tears, flung back  
To heaven—in unnumbered points of light—  
The tender radiance of the rising sun.

Above her towered Adam—primal man;  
Strong, pure, and beautiful; perfect of face,  
Of form, of mind; his glorious being poised—  
Vibrant with power and intelligence—  
Like a young eagle on its untried wings.  
Master and king of all the new-made earth,  
God dwelt within his soul, shone from his eyes,  
And bathed in soft effulgence the fair Eve.

All new, all virginal, that little world  
In which they stood and gazed, in sweet amaze,  
Each on the other—tremulous, but still  
Trustful and unafraid. Fresh from the Hand  
Of the Great Sculptor, and but just awake  
To the warm loveliness of pulsing life,  
They knew not anything of guile, nor woe,  
Nor the dark aspects of a later world.  
Adam, to Eve, was God made manifest;  
Eve was, to Adam, all sweet wonderment.

You say, O skeptic,—and scarce hide your sneer  
The while you say it,—that 'tis but a myth,  
This age-old story of man's origin.  
What if it be? It is too exquisite,  
Perhaps, for men and women of to-day—  
So sadly fallen from their high estate—  
To read as verity; or e'en to read  
At all, maybe. But, fact or legend,—call  
It which you will,—it holds the nucleus  
Of the great problems of these modern times.

True, 'tis a far cry from that earlier day  
Of our first parents' happy innocence  
To this of bitter strife, unholy greed,  
And a great, restless world aflame with hate.  
Eden has long since been an ancient tale,  
Meshed in the cobwebs of antiquity.  
To-day the world looks on a newer Eve,  
A different Adam. Both are far estrayed  
From the rare promise of their parentage;  
Yet both retain their heritage in fee.  
No longer can the woman say, with Eve,  
"I have no law save thee, my overlord!"  
No longer can the man, with recreant Adam,  
Say "'Twas this woman whom Thou gavest me;  
Hers is the fault!" Both stand on equal ground,  
To rise or fall together. Both possess  
Unplumbed potentialities for great  
And glorious achievement. And 'tis given  
To both to see the dawning in the east  
That is to usher in the Age of Truth  
And open a new Eden on the earth.

O Man! O Woman! Rise and rid yourselves  
Of the cheap shams and sophistries that lie  
Between you and the light! Shake off the gyves  
Of earth-bound thought. Forget your rivalries,  
Your frailties and distrusts. Sweep out the silt  
And mud that Time and Error have washed in  
Upon your souls, and on free wings arise  
To breathe the purer air of God's great heights.  
Strengthen each other in the mind and will  
That make for mutual virtue, mutual peace;  
Pledging each other to a fuller life,  
A holier love, a deeper sympathy;  
A broader understanding of yourselves,  
The God within you, and the race's need.

Comrades and friends, united ye shall shape—  
As neither could alone, for tears nor prayers—  
A glorious Future for this war-scarred world!



## THE MASTERPIECE

THE earth, in her pristine splendor,  
Swung free in ethereal space,  
When the Lord, on the Seventh Morning,  
Looked down from the Highest Place—  
And beheld, in that primal sunrise,  
The glory of His Face.

And lo! as He sat and rested,  
In His lonely altitude,  
And gazed on the wonders His Hands had wrought,  
And saw that His work was good,—  
There crept o'er His mighty spirit  
A softer, tenderer mood.

Then He took an amber cloud-drift,  
And the crimson flame that glows  
O'er the rim of the world at sunset,  
And the white of the virgin snows,—  
Breathed o'er all His ineffable fragrance,  
And lo! in His Hand lay—a rose!

## EVERY DAY

I OPEN my soul eagerly to the morning—  
Fling wide its doors and casements—  
So that the sunlight and the winds of heaven  
May enter in and work their will with it,  
Making it clean, and fresh, and beautiful.

I will have no dusty corners in my soul!—  
No dark, unopened, unswept rooms;  
No cobwebs, no litter; no reminders  
Of old hurts, old bitternesses, old hatreds.  
All that is gone, is gone. Every night I close  
The ledgers of my life; I carry nothing over  
To mar the new day's beginning.

So, if Death come and take me unawares,  
Ere the dim dawn's breaking,  
I shall go leaving my books balanced,  
And my house in order.  
Is it not better so?

## THE IMMUTABLE

THE days that swiftly come and go—  
The trivial things that fret us so—  
When all are past, and all forgot,  
Love still will live, though we are not!

## MY SOUL

MY soul is like a wild, white gull—  
Strong and beautiful, clear-eyed, swift-winged—  
That has been snared by a grimy wharf-rat,  
Chained, and imprisoned in an iron cage.

## SANCTUARY

I HAVE knelt humbly in the cathedral shadows,  
With my eyes fixed reverently upon the altar—  
Magnificent with carving, gold and jewels,  
And the triumphal blaze of many candles—  
And everywhere about me the patient semblances  
Of glorified saints and martyrs; and over all  
The great organ flooding the dim, far spaces  
With the tone-splendors of a master's music;  
And all the while my starved soul reaching upward  
In a vague, vain effort to realize the divine Presence!

And I have stood in the shade of an ancient cedar,  
In the cool green depths of a primeval forest;  
And there—with no sound of earth about me  
Save the soft rustle of the breeze among the leaves,  
And now and again the hushed, sweet note of a bird—  
*There* I have found God!

## THE WALL

I AM building me a wall of defense  
Just within the boundary that divides  
Your life from mine ; so that henceforward  
You may enter into my soul's pleasure  
Only when I myself unlock the gate.

It is because I fain would keep it fair—  
This small domain of mine—that I do build  
This barrier of cold gray stone about it.  
I like not to shut out the golden sun,  
Nor the salt breeze that blows up from the sea—  
Nor yet the broad sweep of the meadow lands,  
The wooded hillsides and the open road.  
All these are dear to me ; but oh, my friend,  
My little garden is no whit less dear !—  
And you, who have the whole great world to roam in,  
Have trampled down my garden's dewy lawns,  
Plucked its young buds, broken its tender twigs,  
And heedlessly torn up by their frail roots  
Some of its rarest and most fragrant blooms.

So, lest you devastate me utterly,  
Leaving me nothing that is fair and whole,  
I have begun to build me this dour wall.  
Alas, alas!—it is the only way  
To keep my slender hold upon mine own.

## THE ANCIENT ERROR

EARTH'S millions fight, and gasp, and die—  
Doomed from their birth to woe and thrall;  
While over them the tranquil sky  
Hides God, *Who planned it all!*



## FOR EYES THAT CAN SEE

THERE are those who babble continually of golden streets  
In a wonderful, far-off heaven to which they hope to go—  
eventually ;  
But, I ask you, can you imagine anything lovelier, anywhere,  
Than the golden sunbeams glinting through the trees,  
At the day's end, upon the emerald grass,  
Yonder, in Central Park ?

## POISE

I WILL be calm; that which is in my soul  
    Is greater than the thing which vexes me.  
There is no force which I may not control—  
    No hurt can measure with Eternity!

## THE ANGEL

AN angel winged his way to earth—

We watched his flight with bated breath ;

Nor knew, till he had come and gone,

That we had gazed on Death.

Upward he bore the soul of one

We loved. Freed from earth's prison bars,

In God's green fields she walks to-day,

Beyond the quiet stars.

## THE HIGH HEART

THIS will I do, no matter what betide :  
Walk forward bravely, steadfastly ; eyes front,  
Head up and shoulders squared ; and so will face  
The future forthright, firm and unafraid.

I walk with God, and God with me ; His world  
Is mine, with all the beauteousness thereof.  
Leaf, flower, bird, sky, and all the lovely things  
That could have sprung from naught save God alone—  
These all are mine ; for me were made ; for me  
Are daily re-created, in new forms,  
Each a rare miracle and mystery.  
Wherefore, I must so walk that I may grace  
The world with them, and thereby merit all.



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